

Section II

Introduction

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Project Goal and Preservation Philosophy

The goal of this Preservation Plan is to provide the members of The First Unitarian Society of Plainfield a clear direction on how to proceed with the successful maintenance and preservation of the existing Sanctuary buildings balanced with the need to ensure that the buildings are sufficiently updated to accommodate their continued use for future generations. The preservation philosophy behind this goal is to ensure that work necessary to maintain the buildings are completed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for rehabilitation and that any intervention such as repair work does not cause further deterioration of existing historic fabric and where improvements are needed they are designed to be sensitive to the existing historic fabric ensuring that they do not detract in a detrimental way and/or are reversible. The goal is to provide practical recommendations, which ensure:

- First, the safety of the general public;
- Second, the preservation of existing building fabric; and
- Third, the repair recommendations are phased in an appropriate manner to enable funds to be raised and repairs completed in a timely manner.

Purpose and Scope of Report

This planning document addresses the exterior condition of the existing buildings, as well as an overview of their structural, mechanical, electrical and plumbing conditions. Appropriate planning should always precede preservation work, capital projects or any other “intervention.” The expenditure of financial resources on a historic structure should be well protected with the knowledge that all work items are prioritized correctly. A Preservation Plan is a critically important planning tool and should be prepared when preservation work is being considered. A Preservation Plan should fully document a resource’s history, significance and identify appropriate intervention.

This Preservation Plan contains many sections. In general terms, early sections of the report address the resource’s historical and cultural setting and its importance as well as general information on the materials used to construct the buildings. Later sections assess physical conditions of the materials and the courses of deterioration. Recommendations are then grouped into three phases as a way of minimizing expenses and prioritizing the sequence of restoration over a fifteen year period.

This Preservation Plan is intended to guide future exterior restoration work. Historic Building Architects, LLC (HBA) have addressed the physical needs of the exterior envelope including foundation, frame, roof, walls and windows. The structure of the buildings have been evaluated by Robert Silman Associates, PC. The building’s electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems have been evaluated by Princeton Engineering Group, LLC (Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing Engineers). The leaded and stained glass windows have been evaluated by Femenella & Associates, Inc. Daedalus Projects, Inc. has developed a cost estimate for the phased restoration of the buildings. Material Analysis by HBA has included paint and mortar analysis with replication recommendations. The historic research and National Register Nomination have been completed by Stacey Spies, Architectural Historian and provide an historic overview of the Sanctuary buildings and site. In addition, Precision Building and Construction provided probe

access to concealed conditions to allow the professional team to observe the condition of concealed structures in certain areas.

This report addresses the structures' history and setting, summarizes existing conditions, examines the evidence of distress, determines sound remedial actions, projects probable costs and makes recommendations for action. It places the current situation in perspective, considering the history of the structure, its cultural value and its evolution over time. With this information in hand, the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield can identify their priorities and establish a work program for which contract documents can be prepared.

Acknowledgements

This study is the result of a collaboration of professional experts in the field of historic preservation. Without advice, support, participation and encouragement from all team members, this report would not have been possible. We wish to thank the members of the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield, especially Gerald Heinzer, Jody Hey and George Gowan for their time and thoughtful constructive input. We also wish to thank The Garden State Historic Preservation Trust Fund for a 2006 Historic Site Management Grant administered by the New Jersey Historic Trust.

Conditional Statement

This Preservation Plan should be considered a living document and one that is subject to re-evaluation and revision from time to time as future discoveries (both physical and documentary) come to light and as programmatic realities evolve.

This report concludes the planning phase of the project but does not generate the documents required to execute the repairs and renovations mentioned herein. Such documents, namely drawings and specifications, that would be the basis of bidding, contracts and permits, would be prepared subsequent to this report.

The statements and opinions expressed herein are solely for the use and information of the First Unitarian Society of Plainfield. The opinions reflect the professional judgments of a Registered Architect qualified in the field of historic preservation performing services that are usual and customary. Conclusions drawn in this report are based on those conditions and surfaces that were accessible to the unaided visual observations of the Architect. No warranties or guarantees can be inferred from, or implied by, the statements or opinions contained in this report.

Property Description and Setting

The First Unitarian Society of Plainfield occupies Block 361, Lot 4, along Park Avenue between 7th and 8th Streets. The Sanctuary and its adjoining buildings are contributing historic buildings in the Van Wycke Brooks Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The property consists of three connected buildings: the Sanctuary (1892); the Parish Hall (1925); and the Stevens Religious Education Wing (1958). The most significant is the Sanctuary, a rusticated masonry structure facing Park Avenue that is dominated by a large stained glass window depicting the major religions of the world flanked by two towers. The

wood-shingled Parish Hall is attached to the rear of the Sanctuary. The Stevens Wing is attached to the Parish Hall as a perpendicular ell and extends toward the north to W. Seventh Street.

The landscape surrounding the buildings features masonry terracing at the main east entrance to the Parish Hall and at the North Elevation at the entrance to the Stevens Wing. There is a wooden ramp leading to the terrace adjacent to the Parish Hall East Elevation. There are mature trees and shrubbery around the buildings and a large raised masonry planter bed built against the north foundation wall of the Sanctuary. The property is accessed by a driveway, off of Park Avenue that leads to an oval shaped paved turning circle and parking area to the east of the Stevens Wing, with an oval shaped planted island in the center and a serpentine sidewalk along the east side of the buildings which leads to a garden and playground to the North.

Recommendations for Future Study

1. Investigate the below grade drainage system to evaluate its condition, capacity and function ability.
2. Geotechnical Engineering Investigation to determine the capacity of the soil adjacent to the foundations, especially where large tree removal has occurred and where potential below grade drains may be required.
3. Archaeology, if earth disturbance occurs adjacent to the buildings.
4. Monitor cracks in walls over a 2-year period to determine whether there is any movement that might be of concern.
5. Further material testing is recommended to determine the source of the salt deposits on the masonry. Refer to Appendix B.